

IRS WEB SITE SETS RECORD WITH 500 MILLION HITS

WASHINGTON – Taxpayers are using the Internal Revenue Service Web site more than ever this year, surpassing the number of Internet hits for all of last year's filing season.

The IRS announced Thursday there have been 531.3 million hits at "*The Digital Daily*" between Jan. 1 and March 21. That's a 155 percent increase from the same period last year, when the IRS Web site received 208.4 million hits.

This year's surge of visitors at www.irs.ustreas.gov has already topped Web site usage for all of last year's filing season, which set a record with 444 million hits between Jan. 1 and April 15, 1998.

The IRS Web site offers taxpayers hundreds of tax forms and publications available for immediate downloading without the inconvenience of waiting for mail delivery or making a visit to the local library. In January and February alone, taxpayers downloaded more than 24 million forms, publications and other tax information from "*The Digital Daily*" – an increase from 9.4 million during the same period in 1998.

Visitors can also access information for such things as the latest tax information and answers to the most frequently asked questions. The IRS home page also has special features on the new \$400 per child tax credit and details about how electronic filing can be used to get refunds in half the time of paper returns.

In a related area, new filing season statistics released Thursday show taxpayers continue using electronic filing at a record pace. Computer e-filing of tax returns – either by tax preparers or those using home computers – is 22.5 percent ahead of last year.

The average tax refund check also remains larger than last year, helped in part by the new child tax credit. Through March 19, this year's average refund was \$1,609, 15.2 percent more than last year's \$1,397.

1999 FILING SEASON STATISTICS

Cumulative through the week ending 3/20/98 and 3/19/99

	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Individual Income Tax Returns			
Total Receipts	56,120,000	57,285,000	2.1
Total Processed	47,517,000	47,626,000	0.2
E-filing Receipts:			
TOTAL	19,750,000	22,861,000	15.8
TeleFile (phone)	4,786,000	4,525,000	- 5.5
Computer	14,964,000	18,336,000	22.5
Tax Professionals	14,363,000	16,769,000	16.8
Self-prepared	601,000	1,567,000	160.5
Refunds Certified by the Martinsburg Computing Center:			
Number	43,218,000	43,639,000	1.0
Amount of principal	\$60.363 billion	\$70.223 billion	16.3
Average refund	\$1397	\$1609	15.2
Direct Deposit Refunds:			
Number	14,562,000	17,818,000	22.4
Amount	\$27.210 billion	\$37.264 billion	36.9